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SEBASTIAN VIZCAINO: EXPLORATION OF CALIFORNIA

CHARLES E. CHAPMAN

Even before Rodríguez Cermenho had reached the end of his fateful voyage, there had appeared at Mexico City a rival for the glory and profit of making discoveries in the Californias, a man well acquainted with the galleon route and indeed a shipmate of Rodríguez on the *Santa Ana*. This was a certain Sebastián Vizcaino, who from being a moderately successful merchant desired to convert himself into a conqueror and a "general," or commander, of a fleet, the same Vizcaino who in later years headed an embassy to Japan. By his own account¹ he "lost a great deale of treasure and commodities" when Cavendish took the *Santa Ana*, but he made the round trip to Manila again, reaching New Spain in 1590 with a profit of 2500 ducats on an investment of 200.

In company with several others Vizcaino worked out a plan which he hoped might prove an even richer windfall than that of the trade on the galleon. He and his associates approached the viceroy for a license to engage in pearl-fishing in the Californias, in return for which they agreed to furnish the government with information about that country. In 1594 the viceroy, Luis de Velasco, made a contract with them, but execution was delayed as a result of a quarrel between members of the company. The matter was brought before the courts, which ordered Vizcaino and his companions to begin the voyage within three months' time. Matters were at this point when the Conde de Monterey reached Mexico. Believing that a policy of leniency would best serve the royal interests, he amended the decree of the court, and granted the company a concession to enter the Californias and reduce them by peaceful means to subjection to the crown, in return for which the conquerors were to have the usual vast privileges and exemptions granted to the pacifiers and settlers of new provinces. Accordingly, Vizcaino, who had succeeded to headship in the enterprise, began to raise recruits for the expedition, when it was brought to the Conde de Monterey's attention that the original contract,

¹In a letter to his father, dated June 20, 1590, translated and published in *The principal navigations, voyages, traffiques & discoveries of the English nation*, ed. by Richard Hakluyt. Everyman edition, VII (London and New York, 1907), 133-135.

under which Vizcaíno was acting, had reference only to the pearl-fishery and not at all to the entry and pacification of the land. This gave Monterey an opportunity to consider whether it was desirable to grant the concession he had promised. On this point he wrote to the king, on February 29, 1596, as follows:

I . . . found . . . that a reconsideration was necessary; for, it seemed to me, with regard to the person [Vizcaíno], his quality and capital are not sufficient in connection with an enterprise which may come to be of such vast importance, and one requiring greater backing and a method of proceeding other than what is now thought and deemed sufficient; for, even looking at the matter from the utilitarian point of view, although he make the journey at his own cost and without any expense to Your Majesty, it seems to be of little moment whether he goes for gain and in order not to lose the chance of good fortune, but of great importance the hazarding of not only the repute which would be lost among these nations of Indians if the natives of that country should repel this man and his people, but—this is the principal thing involved—that of the conscience and authority of the royal person of Your Majesty. It appeared to me to be risking much if an expedition which cannot lawfully be one of direct conquest, but one of preaching the gospel and pacification, and of bringing the people into subjection to the crown, were entrusted to a man as leader and chief whose position is obscure and who has not even in less degree, the resolution and capacity necessary for so great an enterprise.

Despite his somewhat unfavorable opinion of Vizcaíno, the viceroy decided, however, after taking counsel with the highest authorities in Mexico, that it would be contrary to justice not to let the expedition take place. As he put it, in the letter above referred to:

And, because I have deemed it meet for the service of Our Lord and that of Your Majesty, inasmuch as it was necessary to go on with the affair since it had been begun and as this man [Vizcaíno] does not possess notorious defects which can rightfully excuse Your Majesty from aiding and fomenting his undertaking, in order that the persons he has enlisted and intends to put on board ship, and who in number and condition make a reasonably good showing, may esteem and respect him, I have done all that lay in my power to show him honor while here and to clothe him with authority in view of the greater danger I foresee and fear on his account, though I would not say it to him—which is some lack of respect and an overbold bearing on the part of the soldiers whom he takes with him, so that in this way they may come to disobey his orders, all this giving rise to great disorder.

Vizcaino at least displayed energy, and in March, 1596, his expedition got under way for the Californias. Three ships, with a large number of men, made up his force. As an indication of his intention to make a settlement it is to be noted that he carried four Franciscans (to convert the natives and reduce them to missions), some of the soldiers' wives, and a number of horses. In his voyage up the coast from Acapulco he lost fifty men by desertion, and one of the friars (because of illness) left the expedition. Crossing to the lower end of Baja California, he came at length, apparently about the middle of August, to the site which Becerra and Cortés had visited before him, and because the Indians received him so peacefully he gave it the name which ever since it has retained, La Paz (Peace). The winter storms of the Gulf of California, which had already begun, were such that he could proceed no farther with his flagship; so it was decided to establish a colony there while Vizcaino himself should push on in the two smaller vessels to explore the northern shores of the gulf. Accordingly Vizcaino started north on October 3. He encountered terrific storms, but weathered them, and at length came to a place where the Indians invited the Spaniards to come ashore. So Vizcaino landed forty-five men. All went well, until a Spanish soldier "inconsiderately struck one of the Indians in the breast with the butt of his arquebus." In consequence there was a fight, in which some of the Indians were killed, but as a boatload of Spaniards were returning to their ship the Indians fired arrows at them from the shore. One man was hit in the nose, and this resulted in a commotion which led to upsetting the boat. Dressed as they were in heavy leathern armor, nineteen of them were drowned, and only five escaped by swimming.

In course of time this event became magnified in the telling until it reached the proportions of a very pretty legend. The story was told that a certain Don Lope, a page of the viceroy, besought the hand of Doña Elvira. The latter at length promised to marry him, provided he could replace a certain magnificent pearl she had lost. Consequently Don Lope joined Vizcaino's expedition. Going on the voyage up the gulf he was one of the men who landed at the place where the battle with the Indians was fought, and was indeed the one who caused it. He saw the identical pearl which would suit Doña Elvira, and seized it from the lips of a chieftain's daughter. This not only brought on the battle, but also the en-

forced abandonment of the province. But Don Lope was well content, for he won his bride,—and then she confessed that she had not lost any pearl at all.

Vizcaino now put back to La Paz, where he found that the colony was not maintaining itself too successfully. According to Franciscan accounts the Indians liked the friars, but objected to the soldiers, who paid scant attention to native customs and too much to native women. Furthermore, all were discouraged by the storms, which prevented their fishing for pearls, numerous indications of which had been found, and the food supply was running short. As the country was unsuited to provide for their wants, Vizcaino gave orders for the return to New Spain. On October 28 the colony was abandoned, after an existence of about two months, and two of the ships sailed for New Spain. Vizcaino in the third ship, with forty of his best men, made another effort, however, to explore the northern shores of the gulf. Again he encountered heavy storms, and this time they were so severe that the rudder-irons broke. Therefore he and his men made the best of their way back to New Spain, "God in pity conducting us," as he himself put it.

Arrived in Mexico, he was eager to make a fresh expedition. They had failed, he said, merely because the voyage had been made at the wrong season. At a different time of the year they might have avoided the storms, but this they could not have known before. He was full of praise for the Californias, though his own experience of them gave little warrant for his encomiums. There were innumerable Indians eager to receive the gospel; the land was twice as large as New Spain and in a better situation, as concerned distance from the equator; pearls were "abundant and of excellent quality"; the waters were richer in fish than any other known sea; there were great resources in salt deposits; and twenty days to the northwest there were "towns of people wearing clothes and who have golden ornaments in the ears and nose, and they have silver, many cloaks of cotton, maize, and provisions, and fowls of the country and of Castile." In case he should be allowed to make another expedition he wished that lands with the Indians upon them be granted to him and his men,² and that they all be made nobles in one of the lower grades of nobility (*caballeros hijosdalgo*), besides receiving a grant of other assistance and favors.

²That is, in *encomienda* as it was called, a familiar institution of Spanish colonial machinery.

The Council of the Indies had already ordered, in May, 1596, that somebody other than Vizcaino be chosen to effect the conquest, intending this measure to apply to the expedition on which in fact he had already departed. But the Conde de Monterey was now more favorably disposed toward Vizcaino. He wrote of him that "in addition to possessing a practical knowledge of the South Sea [Pacific Ocean] and being a man of even disposition upright and of good intentions, he is of medium yet sufficient ability (although I had feared it was otherwise) for governing his people, and this coupled with energy enough to make himself respected by them." As for the voyage "the unfortunate ending . . . was not due to incapacity on the part of Vizcaino, who on the contrary gave evidence of some ability and greater spirit than could have been expected from a mere trader engaged in an enterprise of this kind." The viceroy was not deceived by Vizcaino's glowing descriptions, but was inclined to believe (as indeed the circumstances warranted) that the pearl fisheries might prove rich. He therefore recommended that Vizcaino be assisted, out of royal funds, to make another expedition, but "for the purpose merely of ascertaining definitely what there is there, in order that complete assurance be had concerning the value of the pearl-fishery, and that greater light may be thrown on what relates to the defense and security of these realms and the ships which make the China voyage." Alluding to the voyage of Rodríguez Cermenho and the wreck of the *San Agustín*, he said that people were now convinced that the proper way to explore the northern coasts of the Californias was not by a voyage from Manila in the heavily laden galleons, but by going direct from New Spain in boats of light draught. This exploration, he thought, should be conducted on one and the same enterprise with discoveries in the Gulf of California. The Council of the Indies, under date of September 27, 1599, endorsed the viceroy's plan in the main, requesting that action be taken "with all possible speed." They put great emphasis on the character of the men to be enlisted for the expedition, wishing to take precautions against arousing the hostility of the Indians, but they ordered the explorations in the gulf and those along the Alta California coasts to be undertaken separately.

Yet the expedition was held back until 1602. One of the prime causes for the delay was a fresh entry of foreign ships into the Pacific, wherefore it became necessary to seek them out with all

the forces Spain could command. This time it was the Dutch who caused the trouble. In 1598 two Dutch fleets left Europe and sailed through the Strait of Magellan into the Pacific respectively in 1599 and 1600. One of these fleets, originally under Jacob Mahu and later under Simon de Cordes, did not in fact go very far north before making its way across the Pacific, but the other under Olivier van Noort made several captures off the west coast of South America, and reached the region of the equator before turning west. Notice of these voyages early reached New Spain, and rumors of foreign ships came in from all directions. Passengers on the *San Gerónimo*, the Manila galleon which reached Acapulco early in 1599, declared they had seen four ships near Cerros Island, off the western coast of Baja California, but the Conde de Monterey reported, no doubt with correctness, that more likely they mistook the clouds for ships. With the actual captures made by Van Noort in 1600, Spanish fears were redoubled. One man, who had been a prisoner on Van Noort's ship, declared that the Dutch had accounts of the voyage of Cavendish in their possession and that they planned like him to catch the Manila galleon off Cape San Lucas. A Spanish fleet was therefore sent north from Peru under Juan de Velasco to look for Van Noort, and in September, 1600, it spent some days scouring the Baja Californian coast from La Paz to beyond Cape San Lucas. Finding no enemies they began to doubt their existence in those seas. As one of the captains (Hernando de Lugones) said: "There is news of the enemy everywhere, but they are like phantoms which appear in many places, whereas we find them in none." The immediate danger having in fact disappeared, preparations for the Vizcaíno expedition could now be resumed.

On March 18, 1602, formal instructions for the voyage were issued. These were set forth in great detail, but amounted substantially to what had been decided upon in 1597 and 1599 by the viceroy and the Council of the Indies. Vizcaíno was ordered to make a thorough exploration of the coast from Cape San Lucas to Cape Mendocino, employing two ships of moderate size and a launch, which could get near the coast for close-up observations. On no account was he to go inside the gulf, unless perhaps in passing, on the return journey; indeed, in an earlier communication, dated March 2, 1602, the viceroy informed him that he would incur the penalty of death if he disobeyed in this particular. If weather

permitted he might continue his explorations beyond Cape Mendocino to Cape Blanco,³ but if the coast had a westward trend from Cape Mendocino he was to go a hundred leagues only and not more. Emphasizing the fact that this was a voyage for exploration of the coast only, the viceroy said that Vizcaino was not to stop for a thorough examination of any great bay he might find, beyond observing the entrance thereto and discovering shelter for shipping; in view of the interest in the Strait of Anían this indeed manifested a desire to discover only so much as might surely be possible, rather than the pursuit of wild schemes. Furthermore, he was to make no settlements and was to take great pains to avoid conflicts with the Indians.

No expense had been spared in providing for this expedition. The crews, about two hundred men in all, were carefully selected, most of them being enlisted in Mexico City as both sailors and soldiers. There were three ships of better than usual quality: the *San Diego*, the flagship, on which Vizcaino sailed as "general" of the expedition; the *Santo Tomás*, under the "admiral" Toribio Gómez de Corbán, a sailor of long experience in European service; and the launch, or "frigate," *Tres Reyes*, under Sebastián Meléndez, succeeded later by Martín de Aguilar. In addition there was a long-boat, but that was left behind at the lower end of Baja California, though picked up again on the return journey. An expert map maker was taken along in the person of Gerónimo Martínez⁴ de Palacios, who in fact performed his tasks most meritoriously.⁵ Several other officers and special counsellors of the general went along, besides three Carmelite friars. One of the last named was a certain Father Antonio de la Ascensión, a former pilot, and also something of a cosmographer. His account of the voyage was for many years the best known of the original sources, though his diary is not now extant. Incidentally, the general was accompanied by his son. Provisions for eleven months were carried.

On May 5, 1602, the expedition left Acapulco. Making his way up the coast, Vizcaino crossed over to Cape San Lucas, requiring

³It is interesting to note that the Spaniards already had some idea of the coast as far north as Cape Blanco,—doubtless through voyages of the Manila galleon.

⁴The name of Martínez appears in some documents as Martín.

⁵A series of maps, presumably by Martínez and beautifully done in colors, is to be found at the Archivo General de Indias in *legajo* 60-4-37. Exact reproductions now exist in the Bancroft Library.

several days for the voyage, on account of the winds encountered. The voyage from the Bay of San Bernabé (near the cape), in which he had cast anchor on June 11, to San Diego may be passed quickly in review. It proved to be one of extreme difficulty, for headwinds were met with all the way. For example, the general was three times blown back to the port of San Bernabé before he could round the peninsula to northwestward, and one ship was obliged to return a fourth time. Some days not a league was made, and tacking back and forth was always necessary. Frequently the ships were separated, but managed to find one another again. One of the worst difficulties was in keeping up the water supply off the sterile west coast of the peninsula. "It was not very fresh and was green," said Vizcaíno of one standing pool of water, "but the bottles we carried were filled with it." Always, however, a supply would be found, though absolute want often threatened. Nevertheless, careful explorations of the coast were made, and names were applied without much regard to those given by earlier voyagers.

After a voyage of over four months from San Bernabé, from which he had succeeded in departing on July 5, Vizcaíno passed the line of what was later to become Alta California. "Sunday, the 10th of the month," he said, "we arrived at a port which must be the best to be found in all the South Sea [Pacific Ocean], . . . protected on all sides and having good anchorage." Two days later, on November 12, the day of Saint James (San Diego), a mass was celebrated, and the name San Diego, which it still bears, was given to the port, thus doing honor not only to the saint but also to the general's flagship. Here a stay of ten days was made to repair the ships and give the crews a chance to recover from sickness. Leaving San Diego on November 20, Vizcaíno sighted Catalina Island on the 24th, the day of Saint Catherine (Santa Catalina), wherefore he gave it the name it has since retained, though he did not come to anchor there until the 27th. While there, an incident occurred that is worth reciting. After relating a visit Vizcaíno made to the interior of the island, where he saw an Indian idol and "placed the name of Jesus on the head of the demon, telling the Indians that that was good, and from heaven, but that the idol was the devil," the diary of the voyage goes on to say:

The general returned to the pueblo, and an Indian woman

brought him two pieces of figured China silk, in fragments, telling him that they had got them from people like ourselves, who had negroes; that they had come on the ship which was driven by a strong wind to the coast and wrecked, and that it was farther on. The general endeavored to take two or three Indians with him, that they might tell him where the ship had been lost, promising to give them clothes. The Indians consented and went with him to the captain's ship, but, as we were weighing anchor preparatory to leaving, the Indians said they wished to go ahead in their canoe, and that they did not wish to go aboard the ship, fearing that we would abduct them, and the general, in order not to excite them, said: "Very well."

Apparently Vizcaino thought that some near-by wreck of an unknown ship was referred to, but the reader of the Rodríguez Cermenho account will at once recognize that the reference was to his visit there seven years before and that the *San Agustín* far to the north in Drake's Bay was the wrecked ship indicated.

Going up the Santa Barbara Channel, so named by them, Vizcaino and his men were harangued by an intelligent old chief, who "made himself so well understood by signs that he lacked nothing but ability to speak our language." He had come out in a boat to persuade them to stop at his village, and "such were the efforts of this Indian to get us to go to it that as a greater inducement he said he would give to each one of us ten women. . . ." But as the wind was then behind them for the first time since leaving Acapulco and as winter was coming on, the Spaniards decided to continue on their course. Rounding Point Concepcion, which they so named, they sighted Santa Lucia Mountain, to which also they gave the name that still remains. Coming to "a large bay," Vizcaino sent the launch ahead to explore it for a port, "for this country was the most important of the exploration for the purposes of His Majesty," because it was at this point that the Manila galleon would be most desirous of finding suitable anchorage. This was on December 15. The report of the commander of the launch was favorable, and on the next day the fleet entered the bay to procure water and restore the sick, of whom there were many. They were now in Monterey Bay, which they so named in honor of the viceroy. Near by, too, they discovered the Carmelo River, and named it.

The so-called discovery of the Bay of Monterey—so called, because Rodríguez Cermenho had seen this bay almost seven years

to a day before Vizcaíno did—was the capital event of the expedition. According to Vizcaíno:

We found ourselves to be in the best port that could be desired, for besides being sheltered from all the winds, it has many pines for masts and yards, and live oaks and white oaks, and water in great quantity, all near the shore.

In his letters, too, he praised the port:

in addition to being so well situated in point of latitude for that which His Majesty intends to do for the protection and security of ships coming from the Philippines . . . the harbor is very secure against all winds. The land is thickly peopled by Indians and is very fertile, in its climate and the quality of the soil resembling Castile.⁶

And again:

it is all that can be desired for commodiousness and as a station for ships making the voyage to the Philippines, sailing whence they make a landfall on this coast. This port is sheltered from all winds . . . [and] if, after putting to sea, a storm be encountered, they [the Philippine ships] need not, as formerly, run for Japan, where so many have been cast away and so much property lost.

In these statements Vizcaíno was borne out by Ascensión, who called it "a fine port" and went on to say:

This is where the ships coming from the Philippines to New Spain come to reconnoitre. It is a good harbor, well sheltered, and supplied with water, wood, and good timber.

The curious feature about these reports (and much more might be added to them, including references to the vast wealth in gold and silver that the Indians said was to be found in the interior) is that nearly all they had to say was true, save for the yarn about the excellence of Monterey as a sheltered port, but it was precisely this departure from strict accuracy that had the most effect; the legend of the port of Monterey became one of the moving factors for a century and a half in Spanish expansion to the northwest.

At Monterey the crews were landed and a council was held to determine what the expedition should do. Owing to the unexpectedly long time required for the voyage thus far (more than

⁶Vizcaíno to the king (?). Monterey, December 28, 1602.

seven months), the supplies were becoming exhausted. Some forty-five or more of the men were sick with the scurvy and several had died—sixteen according to one account. It was decided that Admiral Gómez in the *Santo Tomás* should return at once to New Spain, taking with him those who were sickest and also the reports of the voyage. On December 29, therefore, Gómez started back, and eventually made port,—with a loss of twenty-five of the thirty-four men he had on board.

The other two ships left for the north on January 3, 1603. On the 5th they parted company in a storm, and did not again see each other during the rest of the voyage. That same day Vizcaino came to anchor outside the harbor at Drake's Bay, but was driven away the next morning by an offshore wind. Several of Vizcaino's men had been at Drake's Bay before, on the *San Agustín*, notably Francisco de Boláños, chief pilot of the *San Diego*, who recognized the bay as the place where Rodríguez had stopped. On the 12th Vizcaino at last reached Cape Mendocino, whence, in accord with his instructions, he was at liberty to turn back, but the storms drove him somewhat farther to the north, until January 21, when he was able to start the return journey. Meanwhile the intense cold and sickness of the men, of whom at one time "there were only two sailors who could climb to the maintopsail," had combined with the storms to produce great hardship. "The pitching was so violent that it threw both sick and well from their beds and the general from his. He struck upon some boxes and broke his ribs with the heavy blow."

The return voyage, however, was comparatively simple from the standpoint of the winds, for now they helped the ship along its course, whereas, before, they had been a constant hindrance. But the men were so sick with the scurvy and the provisions were now literally so "rotten," that it was a race with death. Yet some explorations of the coast were made, to supplement what they had done on the northward voyage, but they did not dare to stop lest they should be unable to get the anchor up again. Giving up the originally projected exploration of the Gulf of California, the general decided, "as the sick were dying of hunger because they could not eat what was on board the ship on account of their sore mouths," to run for the nearest point of the mainland. Coming to Mazatlán on February 18, Vizcaino and five men, who alone on the ship were able to walk, went ashore to look for help. "With-

out knowing the way, he traveled thirteen leagues inland through mountains and rugged places, for the pueblo of Mazatlán," but lost his way. Fortunately he chanced upon a pack-train, and was thus enabled to get help for his comrades. With rest and proper food the men soon got well, and they took up the voyage to Aca-pulco, which they reached on March 21.

Meanwhile the *Tres Reyes* had been driven north to Cape Blanco. By that time Martín de Aguilar, the commander, and Antonio Flores, the pilot, had died, whereupon the boatswain, Esteban López, turned the boat around and sailed for New Spain, reaching Navidad on February 26, 1603. Two men besides the two officers had died on the voyage. The narrative of this voyage, as told by the presumably ignorant boatswain, gave rise to one of the most fruitful of the Strait of Anián stories. Six leagues above Point Reyes, he said, they came upon "a very, very great river" from the southeast,—evidently Tomales Bay. Farther north

in 41°, near Cape Mendocino, they found a very great bay, into which there entered a mighty river from the northern shore. It runs with such a strong current that although they were a day struggling against it with the wind behind them they could not enter it more than two leagues.

Through what seems to have been a mistake of the Franciscan historian Torquemada, this was stated as in 43°, the limit of the voyage, but the boatswain said it was "near Cape Mendocino," and at another place in his account intimated that it was below it. This agreed with the charts of the voyage, which entered "Aguilar's River" in 41° and Cape Mendocino in 41° 30'. In course of time this river became an almost transcontinental stream, or at the least a great western sea, in the imaginations of the map makers. There seems to be nothing in the place described to correspond even remotely to the description. It is a temptation, however, to believe that the boatswain was confused and that Humboldt Bay, which is "near" Cape Mendocino, though north of it, was the famous great bay discovered by Aguilar. At all events, both the *San Diego* and the *Tres Reyes* missed the real great bay with the powerful river, for they did not get sight of the Bay of San Francisco, either going or coming.

The voyage of Vizcaíno had been a distinct success. Despite the great difficulties he had encountered, including the loss of from

forty-two to forty-eight men (according to different estimates made), he had carried out, to the full and thoroughly, the orders of the viceroy, though it had not been possible, owing to the storms and the sickness of the men, to explore the coasts above Monterey so carefully as he had up to that point. Fortunately for his fame as a discoverer, two things occurred. The reports of his voyage became widely known, and soon were embodied in printed works; but the voyage was not followed up, and the legend of Monterey, to say nothing of Aguilar's River, was allowed to stand. The Conde de Monterey now had nothing but words of praise for the erstwhile "mere trader," and appointed him to the lucrative post of commander of the next galleon bound for Manila. Suitable rewards were also given to others who had taken part in the expedition. It now becomes pertinent to enquire why the plan for the occupation of Monterey, or at least of its utilization as a port of refuge for the galleon, was given up. In 1603, shortly after Vizcaino's return, the Conde de Monterey was succeeded as viceroy by the Marqués de Montesclaros, who not only threw cold water on the plans of his predecessor but also acted in a manner displaying either spite or else a desire for graft. In a letter to the king⁷ he objected to the former viceroy's having appointed Vizcaino as commander of the galleon sailing from Acapulco in 1604, six months after Montesclaros himself should be in office. He had countermanded the order, and made Vizcaino *alcalde mayor* (chief justice and mayor) of Tehuantepec, which he stated was fully as much as he deserved. Later he claimed that Vizcaino had tried to bribe him to make him commander of the galleon, wherefore he dismissed him from the service. The fate of Martínez, the expert cartographer, was even worse. The Conde de Monterey had given him a rich appointment on the galleon. Not only did Montesclaros deprive him of this, but he also caused charges to be brought against him for forgery, and Martínez was condemned and hanged. These measures produced a distinctly unfavorable impression at court, and there were several royal decrees of 1606 whose combined purport was the following: Vizcaino was to be made general of the galleon leaving Acapulco in 1607, and was to make a thorough survey of Monterey on the return voyage, with a view to the founding of a settlement there; upon his arrival in New Spain he

⁷October 28, 1605.

was to be given a number of colonists of the best type, to settle at Monterey; these men were to be offered such inducements as might seem to be necessary (presumably lands, with the Indians in bondage), and a considerable sum of money out of the royal treasury was to be provided for the enterprise.

Montesclaros now found a new way to evade the issue. The galleon for 1607 had sailed before the king's orders came, he wrote,^s and Vizcaíno himself had gone to Spain. It was true that there ought to be a port of refuge for the galleon, but it should be nearer Japan, for it was from the Philippines to just beyond Japan that the worst storms were encountered; when the galleon reached the Californias, the voyage was nearly over, for it required only twenty-five to thirty days to run down the coast to Acapulco, with a favoring wind, too, to help the ship on its way. The best thing to do would be to find the two islands called Rica de Oro and Rica de Plata in 34° to 35°, somewhere far to the west of Monterey.

This revived an old story of uncertain origin. At some time in 1584-1585, when Pedro de Moya was viceroy, a letter was addressed to him by a certain Father Andrés de Aguirre. Aguirre said that he was with Urdaneta in 1565 when that sailor-friar established the Manila galleon service, and that Urdaneta showed him a copy of a document about certain rich islands in the Pacific. Strange as was the account of Father Aguirre, it is worth inserting, for it was this tale, as used by Montesclaros, that changed the course of California history. As Aguirre remembered it, the gist of the story was as follows:

A Portuguese ship sailed from Malacca for the islands of Japan and at the city of Canton took on board Chinese goods. Arriving within sight of Japan she encountered a storm coming from the west, so severe that it was impossible to fetch those islands and she ran before it under very little sail for eight days, the weather being very thick and no land having been seen. On the ninth day the storm was spent and the weather cleared, and they made two large islands. They reached one of these at a good port well peopled, there being a great city surrounded by a good stone wall. There were many large and medium sized vessels in port. Immediately on their entering the harbor there flocked to the ship a great number of persons well-dressed and cared for and manifesting much affection for the people of the ship. The lord of that island and city, learning that they were merchants, sent to the

^sMay 23, 1607.

captain of the ship to say that he and those of his people he might select should come ashore without any fear that they would do them harm. On the contrary, he assured them, they should be received well, and he requested that they should bring with them the manifest of the goods the ship brought, for they would take them and trade for them to their content. The captain communicated this to his people, and it was resolved that the notary of the ship should be sent ashore with the manifest and two merchants, one a Portuguese and the other an Armenian, residents of Malacca. The lord of the land received them in his house, which was large and well built, and treated them with affection, making them presents, they understanding one another by signs. The land was very rich in silver and other things, silk and clothing. The notary and the Portuguese merchant returned to the ship in order to land merchandise and store it in a building which was assigned to them for that purpose, while the Armenian remained with the lord of the land and was treated very hospitably. The merchandise having been taken ashore, and a vast number of persons coming to purchase it, bringing a great quantity of silver, it came to pass that in some thirty days they sold all the goods, making great gains, so that all became very rich, and they loaded the ship with silver. During the time that they were on the island they learned that the lord was suzerain of the other island also, which was within sight, four leagues away, and of others which were near to these, all being rich in silver and very populous. This people is white and well-formed, well cared for and clothed in silk and fine clothing of cotton; an affectionate and very affable people. The language differs from that of the Chinese as well as that of the Japanese, and is readily learned, for, in less than forty days that the Portuguese passed on the island, they were able to converse with the natives. These islands abound in the means of maintaining life well—rice, which is the bread they use; fowls like ours in great number; tame ducks and many hogs; goats; buffaloes and deer and wild boars in great abundance; various birds and game and fishes many and good, and a great plenty of many kinds of fruit. The climate of the land is very good and healthy. These islands are in from thirty-five to forty degrees. The difference in longitude between them and Japan cannot be arrived at, because they had run before the gale and the weather was very thick and obscure. They ran from Japan to the eastward; and, having disposed of their merchandise, they returned to Malacca. They named these islands, out of regard for the Armenian merchant, who was greatly respected by the people of the ship, "Isles of the Armenian."

These were the islands which, as Rica de Oro and Rica de Plata, Montesclaros now proposed to find. Shortly afterward⁹ he brought

⁹August 4, 1607.

his guns to bear on the project for a settlement at Monterey. This time he used the plea which rarely failed, whatever the angle from which it was introduced,—that of foreign danger. The greatest strength of the royal dominions in the Pacific, he said, was that of the difficulty the king's enemies had in getting there or in remaining, after they had arrived. It was on that account that they had been so desirous of finding a strait above Cape Mendocino. To settle Monterey, therefore, would endanger the Spanish empire, for it might serve as a port where enemies as well as Spaniards could refit and procure supplies. And he had already pointed out that Monterey was not necessary for the galleon, while in addition it was too far away from New Spain to be armed against impending dangers.

The ideas of Montesclaros bore fruit. The Council of the Indies gave up the plan for a colony at Monterey, and diverted the funds to a wild-goose chase for the two mysterious islands. The story of Vizcaíno's voyage of 1611-1613 to Japan and of his fruitless search for the two islands has already been told. Meanwhile Alta California was saved for over a hundred and fifty years in the blissful obscurity it needed if the English colonists who were just making their first successful settlements along the Atlantic coast were ever to have their opportunity to acquire the golden area on the Pacific. Out of it all, Vizcaíno retained his fame as the discoverer of the wonderful port of Monterey,—though neither was he the discoverer nor was the port wonderful,—but he lost his chance to become the California Portolá, as Ascensión, perhaps, its Serra. Yet, despite his over-enthusiastic exaggeration, he had played the part of a thorough-going man.¹⁰

¹⁰Such a vast body of materials on Vizcaíno has been uncovered in recent years that the career of this important figure in California history ought to be made the subject of a doctoral thesis. Several transcripts (in the Bancroft Library) from documents in the Archivo General de Indias of Seville, Spain, have been used in the preparation of this chapter, though the following items were more particularly relied upon:.

1. *Documents from the Sutor collection*, orig. Sp. and tr. ed. by George Butler Griffin, in Historical Society of Southern California, *Publications*, II, pt. I. Los Angeles. 1891. Fifteen of the nineteen documents range in date from 1584 to 1603. Five of them were made use of in the preceding chapter, and the other ten here.

2. *Documentos referentes al reconocimiento de las costas de las Californias desde el Cabo de San Lucas al de Mendocino*, ed. by Francisco Carrasco y Guisasaola. Madrid. 1882. This contains forty-four documents ranging in date from 1584 to 1609. Many of the more important appear in item 1 above. Some of the others were also used.

3. *Spanish exploration in the southwest, 1542-1706*, tr. ed. by Herbert Eugene Bolton (New York. 1916), in *Original narratives of early American history* series. This contains a translation into English of a diary of the 1602-1603 voyage (attributed to Vizcaino) and of the relation written in 1620 by Father Ascensión, who had been a member of the same expedition.

4. Torquemada, Juan de. *Primera [segunda, tercera] parte de los veinte i vn libros rituales i monarchia indiana*, I. Madrid. 1793. This account is the one that has heretofore been almost the only source for material about Vizcaino. It has some facts not appearing elsewhere.